

KWL

Description

KWL is a strategy that models the active thinking needed when getting ready to read and actually reading to learn from expository text. The letters *K*, *W*, and *L* stand for three activities students engage in when reading to learn: recalling what they *Know* (activating prior knowledge), determining what they *Want* to learn (setting a purpose for reading), and identifying what they *Learn* as they read (recalling and summarizing). It is a particularly useful strategy to apply to expository or informational texts. It is very important to scaffold the use of KWL with students. Do not just hand them the chart and expect them to use it on their own. Guide them through each phase of the process.

Steps

1. Engage students in a brainstorming session about what they as a group already know about the concept or the topic of the reading. Be aware that underprepared students may have little or no prior knowledge. In that case, it is important to engage in activities that clearly present the necessary background.
2. Students then write particular items they already know and particular items they want to know on individual KWL charts. You may further prepare them by eliciting their ideas about what types of information the reading selection should contain. For example, if the class is going to read an article on Cesar Chavez, students should be able to anticipate that there will be information about his family background, his experiences as a migrant farm worker and in union organizing, and some evaluation of his accomplishments. You may also provide additional items to guide students' reading or to emphasize important concepts.
3. After this preparation, students read the selection and jot down information they learn as they read. They look for information that answers their questions or adds to what they know.
4. When the reading is completed, the class discusses what they have learned, what questions have been answered, and what new questions have emerged. You may prompt them about new information that might not have been anticipated.
5. Finally, students organize and synthesize what they have learned—possibly in another graphic organizer—for study or for a possible writing assignment.

Sources

Buehl, D. (2001). *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Carr, E.M., and Ogle, D. (1987). "K-W-L Plus: A Strategy for Comprehension and Summarization." *Journal of Reading*, 28:626–631.

General Resources

© Pearson Education, Inc., publishing as Pearson Prentice Hall. All rights reserved.